The History Center at Courthouse Square

The DOCKET

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And Now a Word from Our Director

Dear Friends,

Can you believe its been seven weeks since I arrived in Berrien County? I feel as if I've been here for much longer than that, probably living proof that time goes faster when you're busy.

And busy I've been in that time - a steady stream of meetings with our stakeholders, working on plans for new upgrades and renovations at the courthouse, hunting for our new curator, and trying to figure out if humanely removing the groundhog on the grounds is worth it if he keeps coming back. I've named him Avery. I've also named the Orb Spider outside my office window FloJo - because she's as fast as Olympian Florence Joyner. Between Avery and FloJo, I have the makings of a great program for kids about area wildlife. Maybe even a book series.

One of the bigger projects I've been working on is internal updates at the Courthouse. Thanks to a generous donation from the Berrien County Bar Association's annual Golf Outing, we'll be creating a brand new exhibit exploring the history of the courthouse itself upstairs, updating the courthouses exhibit on the first floor, and adding new picture galleries in the hallway and bathrooms. The amazing picture shown above will be one of those on display. I mean, how could I not showcase that mean mugger in the first row with his arms crossed? He is hilarious and this is probably, to date, my second favorite photo in the collection.

Additionally, the board has given permission for me to move forward on updating the gift shop. This project includes a new welcome desk, an updated inventory, fresh paint, and even a reading nook. We're even giving the gift shop a whole new name. Be on the look out on Facebook and in the next edition of the Docket for a poll to help us choose!

With so much coming up, the last quarter of the year may be our busiest yet!

Historically yours,

Rhiannon Cizon
Executive Director

Enter the Railroad: A Course of History Changed

The excerpt below was taken in part from
Locomotives Along the Lakeshore:

Railroads of Berrien County, Michigan *by Robert Myers. Editing was done for clarity and length.*

October 2, 1848 was not the sunshine filled day the residents of Niles had hoped for - in fact, the thunder, lightening, and heavy rain seemed more likely to dampen the community's spirit than anything else. But today was an auspicious day and even though Mother Nature attempted to quell the excitement, the crowds stood in pouring rain to see the first locomotive enter Berrien County.

When it arrived, the crowds cheered and in the rain, dignitaries from across the state, including then Governor Epaphroditus Ransom stood on the platform and spoke about the future this railroad would bring to Berrien County and to Michigan. While it took over a decade for this train to arrive in Niles, it passing through the city, even for a short period, would be instrumental not just to the growth of Berrien County's already existing communities, but would be the sole reason why many communities of today exist.

The Michigan Central Railroad, which owned the locomotive, would be the first to break new transportation ground in Berrien County, but it wouldn't be the last. Over the next one-hundred and seventy years, the Michigan Central would be joined by rail companies big and small. These included the Chicago & Michigan Lake Shore, the St. Joseph Valley, the Cincinnati, Wabash, & Michigan, and the Indiana & Lake Michigan. Other local and regional lines would sprout up before either collapsing or being absorbed by larger companies looking to expand their lines. The Michigan Air Line and the Pere Marquette were two such lines that were well known to residents but are little known today.

The biggest impact of the railroads wasn't the creation of towns, however. Instead, it would shape the very government of this county and change the course of history for two towns. Until 1894, Berrien Springs served as the county seat - with the 1839 courthouse a cornerstone to the community. But as roads failed to improve and lack of transportation became an issue for those attending to county business, grumbling about moving the seat began.

Berrien Springs attempted for many years to bring a railroad to the area and nearly succeeded with the St. Joseph Valley narrow gauge line. These lines are much smaller and more nimble than traditional rail lines and cheaper to maintain - perfect for small towns like Berrien Springs and Buchanan. In 1880, the first lines were laid and by 1881, the company was in a position to offer regular runs between the two communities, although they could be fraught with washouts and other dangers that prolonged the ten-mile trip. Riders could then transfer to a Michigan Central train to continue their journeys elsewhere.

As popular as the line was with riders and how very much needed it was for Berrien Springs, it wasn't a financial success and attempts to expand the line through mergers were tried, but with no money raised, the lines essentially led to nowhere. With other railroads expanding, the St. Joseph Valley continued to fail and finally the state put an end to the company when they discovered the poor definition of the railbeds and condemned the line.

The next ten years were spent attempting the salvage the line - including promises from new owners to convert the existing rails into standard gauge. However, the owner failed to do the job properly and the line continued to be fraught with problems. By 1893, the locals' feelings about the rail line were laid bare when a passenger coach derailed in July of that year and no one bothered to retrieve the car for weeks. The hope for a rail line and thus the future of the county seat in Berrien Springs was dead.

In 1894, the county voted to move to St. Joseph and both towns saw their paths change overnight. While existing companies would lay lines in the area eventually, a centrally located line to boost Berrien Springs and Buchanan would never be a realized dream.

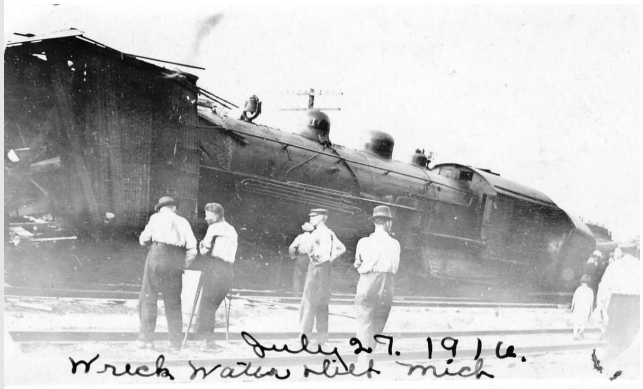
** The photographs accompanying the above story are taken from the BCHA archives. Copies of* Locomotives Along the Lakeshore *are available for sale in our gift shop!*

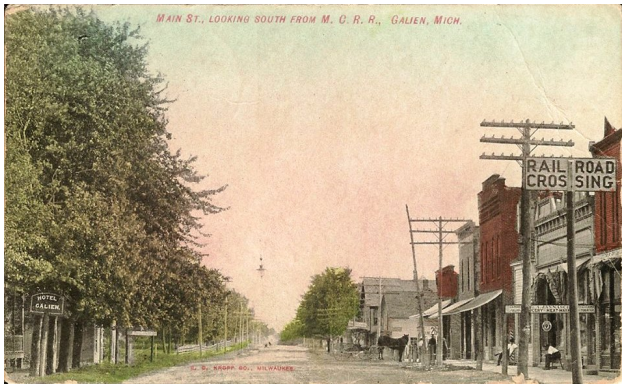
Above: The 1893 Niles Depot was specifically built to show case the Michigan Central Railroad company to passengers passing through on their way to the World's Fair in 1893. The grounds would later include two greenhouses and some of the best landscape design in Berrien County, giving rise to the city's nickname, The Garden City.

Left: A young man gets off at the New Buffalo Station in the early 1900s. The Michigan Central's decision not to place the terminus in St. Joseph (as originally planned) was a boon for New Buffalo and its two families.

Below Left: Derailments weren't uncommon among the Berrien County railroad companies, with the Pere Marquette and the St. Joseph Valley having several during the course of the companies' respective histories. The one shown occurred in July 1916 and additional photos show a large crowd gathering to watch the recovery process.

Below Right: This postcard gives us a glimpse into what visitors arriving on the Michigan Central would see as they stepped down into Galien's main street. Towns like Galien would establish and grow rapidly because of the railroad's arrival. In rural communities, the trains were not just an economic lifesaver, but vital to remaining connected to friends and neighbors in other parts of the state.





From the Collection: Harvest Dreams

Although the temperature states otherwise, fall has officially arrived. And here in Berrien County, farms big and small are harvesting their goods and preparing for the fall tourism season. As they come from Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, and other parts of Michigan, these visitors are taking part in a long agricultural tradition.

Harvesting has always been an important time of year for Berrien county's residents and these men stopped for a moment to showcase the many apples they have already harvested. While the area is filled with U-Pick opportunities today, farm families and seasonal workers are the core of today's bountiful harvests.

The Benton Harbor fruit market, shown here in the 1920s, was a large source of income for many area farmers. There, hundreds of residents could choose among the freshest fruits and vegetables grown locally. Eating local was a significant part of many American's diets through out the year and by supporting new eat local initiatives, we're following in our ancestors' footsteps.

Leaders in Berrien County worked hard to promote the many opportunities the county provided residents and visitors in each season. This page from *Benton Harbor: The Metropolis of the Michigan Fruit Belt* (1915) gives visitors a chance to see what delicious fruits could be found on the many farms around the county and in the various markets,including the one shown above.

BERRIEN SPRINGS MICHIGAN
The Hub of Berrien County
Berrien County in the St. Joseph River Valley is the leading fruit producing center of the United States.
The major part of the fruit is sold on the farm

Berrien Springs promotional material was very similar and in this handout, visitors catch a glimpse at the abundance that the St. Joseph River Valley was producing. Like other farming centers, the fruit and

vegetables, along with livestock, grown here were sent all over the Great Lakes and U.S, contributing to the Midwest's Bread Basket image.

From BCHA Events: Sunday Programs, Thursdays at Courthouse Square, & more

This September was busy with events and tours that brought over 100 people to the grounds! With visitors far flung and local alike, we explored the House of David, showcased the beauty of the courthouse's acoustics, and even laid out plans for the future with our new executive director.

Wanted: Volunteers

For October we need volunteers to help with our Haunted St. Joseph Tours on October 5 and October 13th. Volunteers for these events will help to corral tour visitors and in the case of the cemetery, help lead the groups from site to site. Volunteers will also be needed to help set up and tear down at both events. The BCHA will sign off on any volunteer forms for high school and college students interested in joining us!

We also need volunteers for our annual Signature Event at Lake Michigan College on October 24. Volunteers will be needed to help set up and tear down as well as working registration, greeting visitors, and helping with the silent auction. Limited spaces available and dinner will be included for those who stay through the evening!

Eager to join us? Call 269-471-1202 or email tvelez@berrienhistory.org to be scheduled.

Mark Your Calendar: BCHA Events in October

Now through October 9th - *Berrien County Horse Shows*
Local artist Vasilisa Kiselevich is displaying photos of area horse shows through the month of October. Guests will be able to explore the unique relationship between a rider and their horse.

September 1 through October 18, The BCHA Signature Event 2019 Tickets on Sale
The BCHA's signature event returns this October featuring Marcus Winchester as this year's guest presenter. The October 24th event will include dinner, auction items, and Winchester's

Berrien County Horse Shows
Photography by Vasilisa Kiselevich
at Berrien County Historical Association
August 9 - October 9, 2019

The last few days of Berrien County Horse Shows *are still open to the public!*

Spooky tours are perfect for fall!

Marcus Winchester, an in-demand speaker, is our keynote speaker for our 2019 Signature event!

talk on how the Potawatomi survived the 1830s Indian Removal Act. *$75.00 single ticket, $500 for a table of 8, both include a tax deductible donation.*

October 5, The 2019 Haunted St. Joseph Tours: St. Joseph City Cemetery; 4:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
Join the BCHA and the Heritage Museum & Cultural Center in St. Joseph for our 2019 Haunted St. Joseph tours! The first tour is located in the St. Joseph City Cemetery on Lakeview Avenue. Guests will enjoy spooky stories about some of the town and county's biggest names. Tours run every 45 minutes and children under 18 must be accompanied by an adult over 18 years old. [RAIN DATE: October 6] *$10.00 adults and teens 13 years and older; $5.00 for children 12 years and under.* ***Tickets must be purchased through the Heritage Museum & Cultural Center at 269-983-1191***

October 9, Closing Reception of *Berrien County Horses Shows*, 6:00 p.m.
The BCHA is offering one last look at this summer's exhibit, Berrien County Horse Shows in the Sheriff's House. Guests will enjoy light refreshments and meet with photographer Vasilisa Kiselevich. Prints will be available for sale. *Free Admission*

October 13, The 2019 Haunted St. Joseph Tours: Haunted Houses of State Street; 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Join the BCHA and the Heritage Museum & Cultural Center in St. Joseph for our 2019 Haunted St. Joseph tours! The second tour explores the houses of State Street and the spooky stories that lie within. Tours begin at Bear Park and run every 45 minutes and children under 18 must be accompanied by an adult over 18 years old. [RAIN DATE: October 20] *$10.00 adults and teens 13 years and older; $5.00 for children 12 years and under.* ***Tickets must be purchased through the Heritage Museum & Cultural Center at 269-983-1191***

October 24, 2019 Signature Event featuring Marcus Winchester, *The Pokagon and the 1830 Indian Removal Act* 6:00 p.m.
Join the BCHA as we celebrate history with an evening filled with Marcus Winchester as he explores how the Pokagon survived the brutal removal of area tribes during the first half of the 1800s. Tickets include Mr. Winchester's talk, dinner, dessert, an open bar, and a silent auction. Proceeds from the evening go towards the BHCA's program and outreach department. *$75.00 per person or $500 per table of eight. Call the museum directly to purchase tickets.* ***Advanced tickets only, no tickets sold at the door.***

Thank You: Sponsors & Partners for October's Events

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BCHA Mission Statement
The Mission of the BCHA is to collect, preserve and interpret the history of Berrien County through exhibits, tours, publications, and educational and community outreach programs for public benefit.